

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-08

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 05135

LIMDIS

DA FOR DAMI-FLT

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR, MASS, OTRA, SP
SUBJECT: GOS INTEREST IN HAVING SPANISH DEFENSE MINISTER
VISIT WASHINGTON; POSTPONEMENT OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT OF
SPANISH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, LT. GENERAL VEGA

REF: (A) USDAO MADRID 5116 (DTG 101658Z MAY 78)
(B) USDAO MADRID 5117 (DTG 101701Z MAY 78)

1. DESPITE EFFORTS OF THIS MISSION TO PERSUADE THE
SPANISH GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW LT. GENERAL VEGA TO VISIT THE
U.S. MAY 15-24 AS PLANNED, THE LAST-MINUTE DECISION HAS
BEEN TAKEN AT THE VERY HIGHEST LEVEL TO POSTPONE THE VISIT
TO SOME INDEFINITE FUTURE DATE IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY
POSSIBLE CONFLICT WITH A VISIT TO WASHINGTON BY FIRST VICE
PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE
GUTIERREZ MELLADO THAT THE GOS DESIRES. THE PRESUMED
PURPOSE OF THE GUTIERREZ MELLADO VISIT WOULD BE TO DISCUSS
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AT HIGHER LEVELS WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT QUESTIONS
RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE
TREATY AND, PERHAPS ISSUES RELATING TO POSSIBLE SPANISH
MEMBERSHIP IN NATO. GUTIERREZ MELLADO WILL BE DISCUSSING
HIS PROJECTED VISIT FURTHER WITH THE KING AND PRIME
MINISTER SUAREZ BEFORE A FORMAL APPROACH IS MADE TO THE
USG ABOUT IT.

2. AS WASHINGTON ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND DEFENSE MINISTER GUTIERREZ MELLADO HAS CONSISTENTLY, SINCE THE TREATY CAME INTO EFFECT IN SEPTEMBER 1976, EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT HE WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE THE TIME TO TAKE A MUCH MORE DIRECT INTEREST IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TREATY, OF WHICH HE WAS THE PRINCIPAL MILITARY NEGOTIATOR. HE HAS ALSO LONG EXPRESSED AN INTEREST, RECENTLY FORMALIZED (MADRID 4266), IN PARTICIPATING DIRECTLY IN FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE U.S.-SPANISH COUNCIL. EARLY IN MARCH WE BEGAN TO GET SPECIFIC INDICATIONS THAT GUTIERREZ MELLADO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN VISITING WASHINGTON WITHIN THE COMING MONTHS; HOWEVER, WHEN QUERIED ABOUT THIS BOTH HE AND HIS OFFICE REPEATEDLY STATED THAT HE HAD NOTHING DEFINITE YET IN MIND. IN HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE, ON APRIL 18, PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ DREW ATTENTION TO WHAT HE TERMED LESS THAN PRECISE IMPLEMENTATION OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE TREATY. WE ASSUMED AT THE TIME (CORRECTLY) THAT THESE COMMENTS WERE INSPIRED BY GUTIERREZ MELLADO. WE NOW ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM ONE SOURCE THAT SUAREZ WENT ON TO SAY IN OFF-THE-RECORD COMMENTS AT THAT PRESS CONFERENCE THAT GUTIERREZ MELLADO WOULD PROBABLY BE GOING TO THE U.S. TO DISCUSS THIS.

3. WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS AN UNFORTUNATE COINCIDENCE IN
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TIMING BETWEEN THE VEGA VISIT AND A DECISION AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE GOS -- THAT IS, BY THE KING AND SUAREZ, WE ARE TOLD -- THAT GUTIERREZ MELLADO SHOULD VISIT WASHINGTON. THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE VEGA VISIT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ARMY-TO-ARMY RELATIONS PER SE; THE VARIOUS SENIOR GOS OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS MATTER HAVE EMPHASIZED THIS IS AN INTERNAL MATTER AND HAVE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT IT WILL NOT BE MISUNDERSTOOD IN WASHINGTON. WE HAVE STRESSED TO THEM THAT THE VEGA VISIT WOULD BE AT A DIFFERENT LEVEL THAN A PROSPECTIVE GUTIERREZ MELLADO VISIT, THAT CANCELLATION OF THE VEGA VISIT AT THIS TIME UPSET AT THE LAST MINUTE CAREFULLY LAID PLANS, THAT THE VEGA VISIT WAS IMPORTANT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF ARMY-TO-ARMY RELATIONS, AND THAT THE PROSPECTIVE GUTIERREZ MELLADO VISIT COULD TAKE SOME TIME TO PREPARE ADEQUATELY. THEY HAVE RESPONDED THAT THE KING AND SUAREZ HAVE DECIDED GUTIERREZ MELLADO SHOULD GO TO WASHINGTON AND THEIR ESTABLISHED INTERNAL PROTOCOL MAKES IT INAPPROPRIATE FOR VEGA TO GO SHORTLY BEFORE HE DOES. GUTIERREZ MELLADO HIMSELF HAS SENT A MESSAGE TO THE CHARGE CONFIRMING THAT THIS IS THE SITUATION. (THEY MAY ALSO BE CONCERNED THAT VEGA MIGHT

TAKE POSITIONS AT WHATEVER LEVEL THAT WOULD UNDERCUT
WHAT GUTIERREZ MELLADO MAY WISH TO SAY.)

4. AS YET NEITHER GUTIERREZ MELLADO NOR HIS SUPERIORS
HAVE SUGGESTED SPECIFIC DATES FOR A VISIT, OR TOPICS.
A KEY MEMBER OF GUTIERREZ MELLADO'S STAFF HAS TALKED TO
US INFORMALLY IN TERMS OF A POSSIBLE INTEREST IN VISITING
WASHINGTON IN JUNE OR JULY. WE IN RETURN MADE THE POINT
THAT A USEFUL VISIT WOULD REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE
PREPARATION ON BOTH SIDES. WE HAVE NOT RAISED IN ANY
WAY WITH THE SPANISH THE IMPLICATION OF GUTIERREZ
MELLADO'S ALSO BEING FIRST VICE PRESIDENT, NOR HAVE THEY

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WITH US THUS FAR AT LEAST.
(GUTIERREZ MELLADO WAS WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE DURING
MUCH OF THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO MADRID, MAY 17-18,
1977.)

5. A VARIETY OF SENIOR U.S. OFFICIALS WHO HAVE PASSED
THROUGH GUTIERREZ MELLADO'S OFFICE OVER THE PAST TWO AND
ONE-HALF YEARS HAVE HEARD HIM EXPOUND AT LENGTH AND WITH
SOME FERVOR ON HIS VERY PERSONAL DOUBTS ABOUT THE
ADEQUACY OF THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP ESTABLISHED BY THE
TREATY -- THE ABSENCE IN HIS MIND OF A TRUE SPIRIT OF
PARTNERSHIP AND EQUALITY, THE INSUFFICIENCY OF U.S.
MILITARY ASSISTANCE, AND HIS PERCEPTION THAT U.S. ARMS
TRANSFER/MILITARY ASSISTANCE POLICY TOWARD SPAIN HAS
TIGHTENED SINCE THE TREATY CAME INTO EFFECT. IN MARCH
AND APRIL OF LAST YEAR SUAREZ HIMSELF RAISED CERTAIN

SPANISH DESIRES FOR NAVAL EQUIPMENT WITH ADMIRAL HOLLOWAY
HERE AND THEN WITH THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE IN WASHINGTON.
IN FEBRUARY WE WERE MADE AWARE OF CERTAIN CONCERNS BY
THE KING ABOUT ASSISTANCE TO THE SPANISH NAVY (MADRID
1226). THESE VIEWS CAN ONLY HAVE BEEN REINFORCED BY THE
CONTINUING INFLATIONARY IMPACT ON THE FUNDS AVAILABLE
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UNDER THE TREATY AND BY RECENT STRONGER DEMANDS FOR
MORE RAPID MODERNIZATION OF THE SPANISH MILITARY FORCES
ARISING OUT OF BOTH RENEWED CONCERNS FOR THE SECURITY OF
THE CANARIES AND AN APPARENT MORE RAPID TIMETABLE OF
CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE MEMBERSHIP IN NATO.

6. WE UNDERSTAND FROM THE GERMAN EMBASSY HERE THAT
OVERTURES ARE ALSO BEING MADE BY GUTIERREZ MELLADO FOR AN
EARLY MEETING WITH THE GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTER.

7. THE CHARGE HAS SENT A MESSAGE TO GUTIERREZ MELLADO
OFFERING TO DISCUSS HIS DESIRE TO VISIT WASHINGTON WITH
HIM AT HIS CONVENIENCE, AND HAS BEEN TOLD THAT GUTIERREZ
MELLADO FIRST NEEDS TO DISCUSS IT FURTHER WITH SUAREZ AND
THE KING, AFTER WHICH HE PRESUMABLY WILL BE IN TOUCH.
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